

CAL PARK HILL TUNNEL REHABILITATION & MULTI-USE PATH

INFORMATIONAL OPEN HOUSE AND PUBLIC MEETING –COMMENT SUMMARY DECEMBER 12, 2005

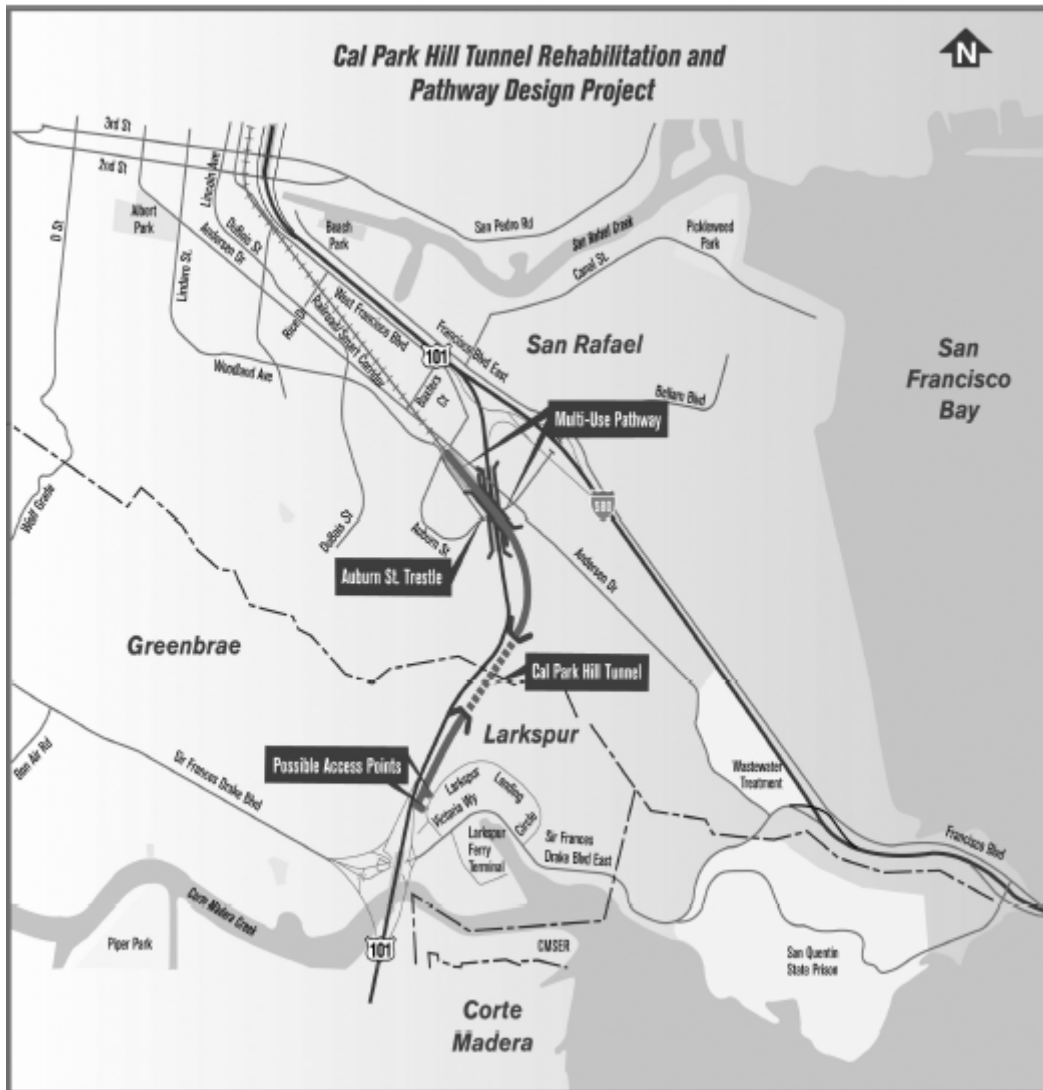
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Cal Park Tunnel and Multi-Use Tunnel Rehabilitation project is being implemented by the County of Marin in partnership with Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART), the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM), and other stakeholder partners. The project would restore the Cal Park Hill Tunnel for bicycle/pedestrian travel and potential passenger rail shared use. The 1,105-foot long tunnel, originally used for rail operations, suffered from deferred maintenance for many years and was later closed due to fire and partial collapse. It will be cleared of debris and structurally rehabilitated, to accommodate the bicycle pedestrian use, and to allow for the facility's potential future use as a commuter rail tunnel. Lighting, communication equipment, and other amenities will be added to provide for public safety. The 1-mile long Class 1 bicycle and pedestrian path will be constructed between Andersen Drive and West Francisco Blvd. in San Rafael and the vicinity of Larkspur Landing Circle in Larkspur, mainly within the existing railroad right of way.

The bicycle and pedestrian path will provide an important link between two major transit centers - downtown San Rafael and the Larkspur Ferry Terminal. This project provides the only opportunity for travel between these nodes at a reasonably level grade for cyclists. When completed, bicyclists will be able to travel easily and safely between the ferry and downtown San Rafael with a minimum number of road crossings. Travel time for bicyclists and pedestrians traveling between these two important points will be reduced by at least 20 minutes, eliminating steep grades and traffic conflicts, and allowing for travel along an accessible path that is open to commuters, recreational cyclists and pedestrians of all ability levels. The path will provide an important link for non-drivers, including children and the disabled. Preparing the tunnel bed for potential rail use during rehabilitation will eliminate the added cost and inconvenience of closing the tunnel at a later date and reconfiguring the path to allow for rail.

The project is currently in final design, with a number of issues, including pathway connections, and the operations plan for the facility being developed as part of this phase of design. The overall cost of the project is estimated at \$17 million, including \$10 million for the multimodal bicycle and pedestrian facility and tunnel reconstruction and an additional \$7 million for work necessary to accommodate potential rail without disrupting the pathway. All rail-related costs are funded through SMART, the commuter rail agency. The project is fully funded, with the majority of funding coming from Regional Measure 2 funds from the Transportation Authority of Marin and SMART. Additional funding is available through Marin County, State and Federal grants.

Figure 1: Map of Project Location



PURPOSE OF OUTREACH PROCESS

The purpose of the public outreach meeting was to provide community members with information on the project scope, design issues, and to gather input from the community. The Outreach Process for this project was designed to encourage broad community input. Future public meetings will provide additional opportunities for comments and questions.

NOTIFICATION

Extensive effort was devoted to informing the public about the meeting by utilizing existing community resources and information networks. The project team sent meeting notifications via email to community members who have indicated an interest in the project, members of the project's Technical Advisory Committee, as well as community groups either in the project area or with common interests. The emails gave a brief explanation of the project, and encouraged recipients to attend the Open House /Public Meeting. These groups included the Marin County Bicycle Coalition, Marin Conservation League, the Marin

Chapter of the Sierra Club, the Marin County Board of Education, and the Canal Alliance. Emails were also sent to the entire mailing list for TAM, the Marin County Board of Supervisors, and citizens attending the Greenbrae Interchange public meeting. Paper flyers for the meeting were distributed at Larkspur Landing Ferry, local libraries, a local daycare facility, and local bicycle shops.

A full-page newspaper advertisement with a map of the project area was placed in the Marin Independent Journal on December 8. TAM also distributed a press release to local newspaper and TV outlets.

All meeting information was posted on the TAM website and the Marin County web site, and was announced verbally at several TAM and Board of Supervisors meetings.

INFORMATIONAL OPEN HOUSE AND PUBLIC MEETING

Marin County and its partners, the Transportation Authority of Marin and SMART, organized an Informational Open House and Public Meeting held on Monday, December 12, 2005. The Open House/Meeting was held in San Rafael at the San Rafael Community Center on B Street. Over 100 community members, elected officials and other interested parties attended. Marin County Supervisors Steve Kinsey and Susan Adams, and TAM Executive Director Dianne Steinhauser were present.

The open house format provided an opportunity for participants to view exhibit boards with project information. Exhibit boards were organized into four topic areas: project overview, pathway connections, project operations and amenities, and project history. Team representatives were stationed with each set of exhibits to answer questions and record comments. Open house style participation and viewing of exhibits was encouraged before and after the presentation portion of the meeting.

The presentation included a summary of the project status and history, and a discussion of each of the important topic areas covered in the meeting. Key areas in the presentation included a short history of the tunnel, current tunnel status, a description of the proposed project including the project area and access points, options being considered, project funding, and the project schedule. Following the presentation, the meeting was opened up to questions and comments from participants.

At the meeting, participants were provided with materials including an agenda, project description, presentation slides, and comment cards. All materials made available at the meeting, including the power point presentation used in the project are included in Appendix A to this report.

Members of the public were assured that they could comment in a number of different media and formats, including recording comments at the displays, commenting verbally during the appropriate time on the agenda, commenting in writing via the comment cards provided, and commenting electronically via the website.

KEY ISSUES & CONCERNS

Meeting participants had an opportunity to ask questions and provide written and verbal comments at the meeting, as well as to submit written comments at their convenience. Over 60 public comments were submitted. Below is a summary of the comments submitted received to date in all formats. Comments have been separated into general topic areas in order to group similar ideas. This summary is not a transcript of the comments received; instead it summarizes the major issues and concerns of participants.

Written correspondence is included in Appendix B at the end of this report. Appendix C is a transcription of all comments made in the display areas at the meeting and a summary of all verbal comments made at the meeting.

General Comments

Participants indicated a high level of enthusiasm for this project, comparing it with the Tiburon and Greenbrae multi-use trails, both very popular bicycling and pedestrian links and heavily used recreational paths. It was seen as an enhancement to the community and the County, and a safe way for people of all ages and abilities to get between these communities. Nearly all commenters spoke in favor of the project.

Hours of Operation

The most common topic area concerned the hours of operation of the proposed facility. Many participants expressed very strong support for keeping the tunnel open 24 hours a day. Reasons cited include:

- lower incidence of crime because of more “eyes on the trail”
- cost to open and close tunnel every day
- links to transportation, especially the ferry, when the buses are not running
- return on investment – the community is not getting value when the tunnel is closed
- provide late night link between San Rafael and Corte Madera for restaurant workers who leave work after 11pm
- encourage commuter use because the tunnel would be reliably open

One participant cited the Ft. Baker tunnel, which is open 24/7 with no negative consequences; and the Golden Gate Bridge, which at one time closed the sidewalk during certain hours. The commenter found that he could not rely on the bridge sidewalk being re-opened at the scheduled time, causing great inconvenience to travelers.

Several participants cited the April 2001 [study](#) by the Rails to Trails Conservancy as a resource for data supporting increased safety when tunnels are open 24 hours, as well for many aspects of the design and use of tunnels as trails.

A minority of commenters suggested that if the tunnel had to be closed during some hours, open hours should, at minimum, coincide with the ferry schedule. However, many commenters suggested that even these hours would be insufficient.

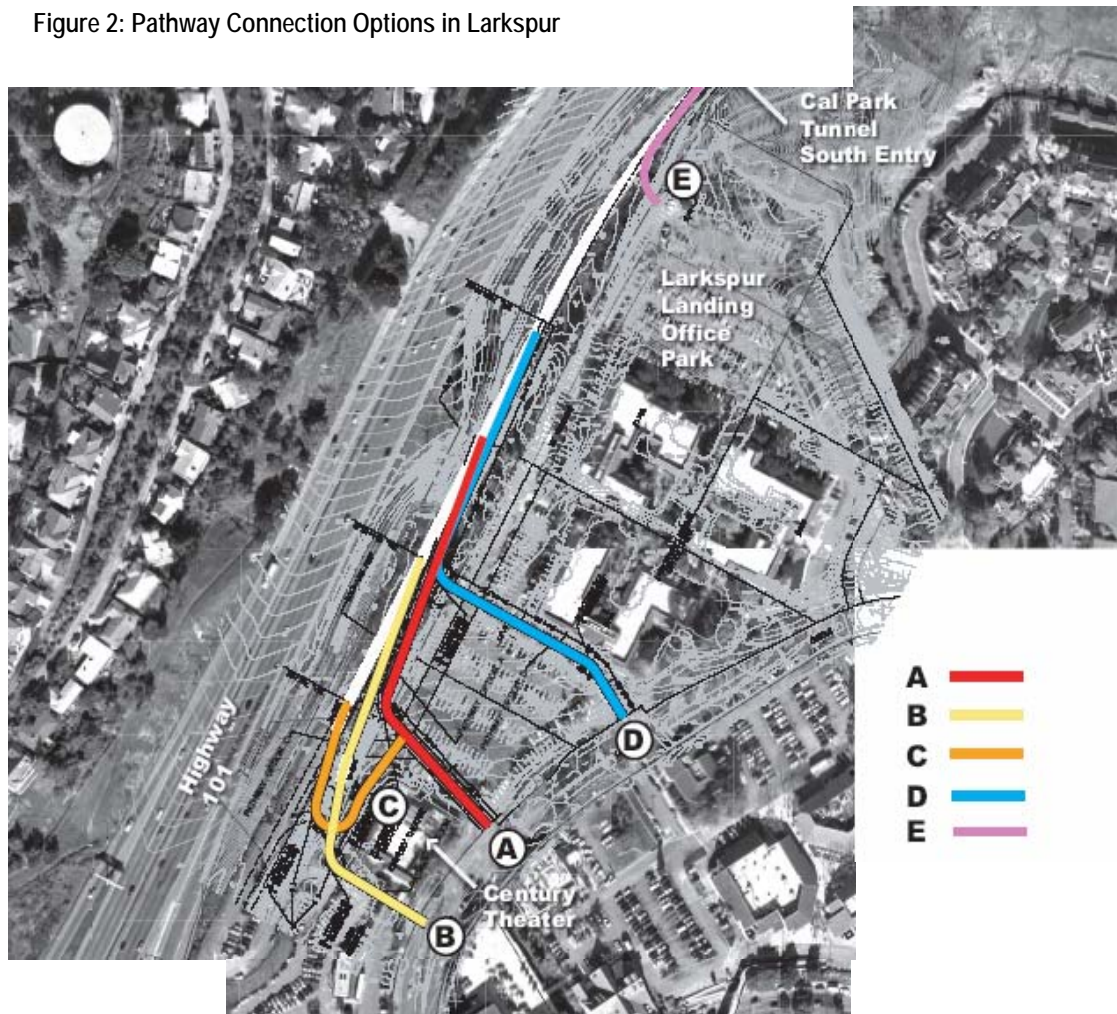
Access and Connections to the Path and Tunnel

Connecting to the Ferry

Five options for a southern connection from the tunnel to Larkspur Landing Circle, lettered A through E, were presented. Note that all of these options describe possible paths up to the northerly curb line at Larkspur Landing Circle, the boundary of the project area.

Participants noted that the path/tunnel project will be an important connection to the ferry terminal, allowing shorter travel times and safer access for bicycles and pedestrians. Access from the tunnel to the pedestrian overpass over Sir Frances Drake would require path users to travel through the Larkspur Landing Shipping Center parking lot. Both users and property owners were concerned about mixing path users with auto traffic as they make their way to the north end of the overpass. Figure 2 shows the connection options currently being studied.

Figure 2: Pathway Connection Options in Larkspur



Most commenters who offered opinions about connections in Larkspur preferred Option D, because of its connections to the ferry and to other destinations in the area, and recommended options that could enhance the user's experience and safety. Suggestions included installing a round-about at Larkspur Landing Circle to calm traffic at that connection point. One participant suggested that if a path through the parking lot were to be required, that the pathway be clearly distinguished from the parking area through the use of visual surface treatments like pavers, raised pavement, or colored surfaces. A commenter suggested a preference for Option B, and that Option D would be the least preferred.

Participants noted the economic benefits to the area, suggesting that non-motorized and off-peak ferry trips may increase, and that the shopping center would benefit from the increased traffic from path users. One participant noted that with increased bicycle use, more bicycle racks and lockers would be needed at the Ferry Terminal.

One commenter emphasized the need to consider any future SMART station location and track layout to the Larkspur and a potential Corte Madera extension in evaluating connections.

South End Connections

Residents of the San Quentin area are concerned about safe access to San Rafael, since their children are in the San Rafael District and often bicycle to Davidson Middle School. Commenters said that traffic will

soon be increasing and along Sir Francis Drake if the new Condemned Inmate Facility starts construction as planned in June 2006. They see the tunnel rehabilitation project as providing a safer route for students and other commuters. One participant wanted to know if there was a way to connect this path to the Richmond Bridge. Commenters were also interested in how this facility would connect to other planned bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure including the Central Marin Ferry Connection Project.

Path Alignment and Rail

Several participants supported aligning the bike path on the east side of the rail along the length of the project. One participant noted that the rail might be extended to Corte Madera, which would affect this alignment. He also noted that SMART will need a grade-separation at Anderson Drive, and that if the rail station goes into the "bowl" at Larkspur, which is one option in the current Draft EIR for SMART, it will cross the bike path.

Another commenter noted that the SMART DEIR calls for a change in the angle between the rail and Anderson Drive, for greater safety, and inquired whether this would require the purchase of land for the rail right of way, and if so, who would pay for it.

ADA Access

Several representatives from The Center for Independent Living emphasized that the path will provide a safe level connection and increased mobility for the disabled community, especially for night travel when the buses are not running.

Amenities

Participants had several suggestions for amenities along the pathway, including:

- Benches at either end of the tunnel
- Trash and recycling bins
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- Decomposed granite for the rail side of the trail for runners to use until the rail goes in
- "Park and Pedal" areas, where people could drive with their bicycles to a connection point to get on the trail and cycle to one of the transit centers
- Open sections of the trail for adoption by community groups, as done on highways

Tunnel Design and Construction

Commenters questioned whether the separation wall, which will divide the tunnel into a "rail side" and a "bicycle and pedestrian side" could be planned for but not implemented initially to provide more room to bicyclists and pedestrians until the wall is needed. Several participants suggested that the footing for the wall, but not the wall itself, be installed initially, and then when the rail is approved, the rest of the wall could be installed. Another suggestion was to allow the top section of the wall above 8-9 feet to tilt away from rail, particularly at the north end, or create a bike path ceiling to alter the inside proportions.

Another participant suggested having an acoustical engineer design noise-canceling surfaces into the walls.

Security

Some participants expressed concern about security in the tunnel, especially at night. Commenters made suggestions for increasing security, including placing security cameras in the tunnel that could be

monitored by a private security contractor; regular patrols by the Sheriff and Search and Rescue, and vandal-proof lighting on the whole project. The Rails to Trails Conservancy report on tunnels was cited as a source of data on security in tunnels used as trails.

Project Cost

Participants suggested that the team get started right away “before the price goes up”. Possible alternative funding sources were cited, including funding from MTC and Caltrans.

Contracting Issues

Participants asked whether Marin County would have flexibility to select the lowest cost contractor and whether the contractor could be required to hire local workers for the project.

Other Information

One participant urged TAM to do further outreach to the Canal residents, and to provide Spanish translation at the meetings. Translation was provided for this meeting; however, no participants indicated a need for translation.

Next Steps

The project team has scheduled a meeting with the Technical Working Group for February. This meeting will focus on issues that must be resolved to complete the 60% design. In preparation for that meeting, the team expects to meet with emergency responders, the County's Parks and Open Space staff (responsible for maintenance and operations of the facility) and local property owners to discuss specific issues before recommendations are made to the Technical Working Group in February.

Future informational open house meetings will be held to keep the public informed and up to date as progress is made toward the final design.